

MALE YOUTH PERCEPTION OF MILITARY RECRUIT PAY

**The Congress of the United States
Congressional Budget Office**

PREFACE

The appropriate level and structure for military pay has been a much-debated topic, particularly since the advent of the All-Volunteer Force in 1973. A 1982 report, citing the findings in a survey of youths' knowledge of and attitudes toward military service, asserted that young persons grossly underestimate recruit pay. Based on these findings some in the defense community have suggested that it might be worthwhile to advertise recruit pay more fully, perhaps funding this increased advertising through limits on recruit pay raises. At the request of the Subcommittee on Defense of the House Committee on Appropriations, CBO has analyzed these survey findings on pay to determine if they support the need for more advertising.

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In accordance with CBO's mandate, this paper presents the results of CBO's analysis but does not make recommendations.

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CONTENTS

	<u>Page</u>
PREFACE	ii
SUMMARY	vi
CHAPTER I. INTRODUCTION	1
CHAPTER II. SURVEY FINDINGS ON KNOWLEDGE OF RECRUIT PAY.....	3
Low Response Rate to the Recruit Pay Question.....	3
Accuracy of Pay Estimates.....	5
Perceptions of Military Pay	7
Limitations on Influences Drawn From the Data.....	9
CHAPTER III. THE ROLE OF ADVERTISING.....	11
Limits of Mass Advertising.....	11
Previous Research on the Effects of Pay on Military Recruiting	12
Need to Better Inform Youth	14
APPENDIX MILITARY PAY AND ITS RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER SURVEY VARIABLES	17

TABLES

	<u>Page</u>
TABLE 1. DISTRIBUTION OF MALE SURVEY RESPONDENTS ESTIMATING MONTHLY BASIC PAY FOR RECRUITS	4
TABLE 2. NONRESPONSE RATES AMONG NEW RECRUITS TO ALTERNATIVE FORMS OF A QUESTION REQUIRING AN ESTIMATE OF THEIR BASE PAY	6
TABLE 3. MALE YOUTH PERCEPTIONS OF WHERE "GOOD INCOME" IS MORE LIKELY TO BE ACHIEVED.	8
TABLE 4. EFFECT OF BEING TOLD ACTUAL RECRUIT PAY ON RESPONDENTS' INTEREST IN MILITARY SERVICE.....	12
TABLE 5. CHANGE IN ATTITUDE TOWARD MILITARY SERVICE AFTER BEING INFORMED OF RECRUIT PAY, BY DEGREE OF INTEREST IN MILITARY SERVICE	13

APPENDIX TABLES

	<u>Page</u>
TABLE A-1. DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF GROUPS WITH POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE PROPENSITIES TO MILITARY SERVICE.	16
TABLE A-2. CAREER EXPECTATIONS AMONG MALE HIGH SCHOOL SENIORS.	17
TABLE A-3. TREND IN PROPENSITY FOR MILITARY SERVICE	18
TABLE A-4. TRENDS IN PROPENSITY OF MALE HIGH SCHOOL SENIORS FOR SPECIFIC MILITARY SERVICES	18
TABLE A-5. MALE HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATE, I-III A ENLISTMENT CONTRACTS SIGNED IN FISCAL YEAR 1977-1982.	20
TABLE A-6. CONTACT WITH A RECRUIT (LAST SIX MONTHS) AND KNOWLEDGE OF RECRUIT PAY AMONG MALE HIGH SCHOOL SENIORS.	21

SUMMARY

Intuition, supported by a considerable body of empirical research over the past decade, suggests that changes in military pay can affect both recruitment and retention of better-qualified military personnel. Recently, however, doubts have been raised about the sensitivity of recruitment to entry-level pay. Last year, for example, some pay bills introduced in the Congress proposed not increasing pay for new recruits but targeting increases toward the career force. Similar bills have been introduced this year.

Some evidence that could be used to support limits on recruit pay raises appeared in a 1982 report sponsored by the Department of Defense, which analyzed youth attitudes toward military service. The report found that youth substantially underestimate the amount a new recruit earns per month. The report asserts that correcting these widespread and marked misconceptions about military pay might be the single most useful communications strategy for attracting new recruits. This conclusion, if correct, would lend support to those who believe that, instead of continued increases in recruit pay to sustain quality enlistments, these funds could be better used to expand advertising in an effort to raise awareness of recruit pay.

To explore this issue, CBO examined the survey data upon which the report was based. CBO's analysis found that the conclusion that young people substantially underestimate the true value of recruit pay represents too broad a generalization. About half of those surveyed failed to give an estimate. Among the respondents, the median estimate of pay was \$495 a month, close to the true value of \$550. The earlier report apparently erred by assuming that non-respondents estimated pay at zero.

While the median estimate was close to the true value, many young people did underestimate pay. Among those who responded, only about one-third estimated recruit pay accurately (defined in this study as estimates between \$500 and \$600 a month). About three-quarters of the remaining respondents underestimated pay. Moreover, more than half of all those surveyed tended to believe that civilian jobs offer better prospects of earning a good income than in military service. Even among those who indicated some or great interest in military service, a substantial fraction (about 40 percent) thought that civilian jobs offered better earning prospects.

The recent success in attracting military recruits--only part of which can be explained by high unemployment--suggests that military compensation is roughly equivalent to pay in the civilian sector. Thus these survey findings could imply that advertising designed to correct young people's misconceptions about pay would stimulate more enlistments.

Other data in the same survey suggest, however, that it might not. Those who were asked to estimate recruit pay and subsequently were told its actual value did not necessarily display more interest in military service. Among those already favorably inclined, such knowledge tended to strengthen interest in military service. Among others, however, the effect was quite small. This implies that advertising of recruit pay would be unlikely to stimulate interest in military service except among those already so inclined.

Moreover, numerous studies have shown that reductions in pay will reduce the number of better-qualified young persons willing to enter the military. Thus, if additional advertising comes at the expense of pay raises, recruiting could actually be hurt.

What then is the proper role of advertising, especially advertising of pay? Early in the recruiting process, advertising is probably a useful way of stimulating interest among potential candidates and prompting them to further explore possible enlistment opportunities. At this early stage in the enlistment process, advertising should probably concentrate on exposing youth to a wide variety of benefits and attributes generic to the services, including pay but also skill training, improved employment opportunities after return to civilian life, and possibly educational benefits. Conveying accurate information about military pay, the survey results suggest, is important in convincing those already interested in the military to make a final, favorable decision. Yet advertising alone cannot "close the sale." A definitive explanation of military benefits such as pay in an effort to induce an enlistment should best be left to a recruiter or guidance counselor.

CHAPTER I. INTRODUCTION

During the latter half of the 1970s, raises for military personnel were capped at levels below what wage surveys indicated were comparable to increases in the private sector. This fact--coupled with an expanding economy after the 1974 recession, limits on recruiting and retention resources, and other problems--caused a precipitous decline in the quality level of military recruits, in terms both of aptitude and of education. In response to these concerns, the Congress raised pay by almost 19.5 percent across the board in fiscal years 1980 and 1981. Other benefits were also substantially increased.

In fiscal year 1982, however, the Congress decided to target the military pay raise toward career servicemembers and to provide less than a comparable increase for junior enlisted and officer personnel. For fiscal year 1983, the subject of targeted military pay raises arose again, with the Senate Committee on Armed Services proposing no raise for new recruits and a 4 percent increase for all other military personnel. The House Committee on Armed Services, however, recommended a 4 percent across-the-board increase for all military personnel. ^{1/} Since neither bill was enacted into law by October 1, 1982, the Administration's recommendation of a 4 percent across-the-board pay raise took effect for fiscal year 1983. The issue of caps on military pay has arisen again, however, with the Administration's fiscal year 1984 budget proposal to freeze pay for all federal employees. In response, bills have been introduced to eliminate pay raises for recruits and to target larger raises toward more senior personnel.

During the debates on limits over recruit pay raises, the issue of youth awareness of military pay was raised, especially in light of reported findings of a recent survey. ^{2/} The report on this survey, contracted for by the Department of Defense, asserted that 16-to-21-year-old youth grossly

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1. The full House did, however, pass their version of the military pay bill on September 29, 1982, which contained the 4 percent across-the-board raise.
 2. Market Facts, Inc., The Youth Attitude Tracking Study Fall 1981 (April 1982).

underestimate an enlisted recruit's entry-level pay. Survey analysis accompanying the report stated that the median estimate of recruit pay was \$75 a month, compared to actual recruit pay of \$550 a month. A majority of the youths also believed that "good income" was more achievable in the private sector than in the military. The report on the survey suggested that increased advertising to improve awareness of recruit pay among young people might increase their interest in military service and possibly stimulate more enlistments. ^{3/} Given the survey findings in this report, some have suggested that money devoted to pay raises for recruits might be better spent advertising present pay levels.

This study examines this survey in an attempt to explore this issue and shed some light on how youth perceive military pay. Chapter II presents the survey's results regarding respondents' perceptions of recruit pay. (Appendix A discusses other survey results.) Chapter III addresses the issue of whether extra money should be spent on advertising recruit pay, perhaps at the expense of pay raises.

3. Ibid., pp. 91 and 153.

CHAPTER II. SURVEY FINDINGS ON KNOWLEDGE OF RECRUIT PAY

Since 1976, the Department of Defense has sponsored a nationwide telephone survey of 16-to-21-year-old persons. The survey asks young persons a number of questions regarding their career plans, interest in military service, and perceptions about military service, including pay. This study deals with the findings of a survey of 5,200 males in November 1981. 1/

This study's analysis shows that many persons did not respond to the survey's question about recruit pay. Among those who did, there was a tendency to underestimate pay, though not by nearly as much as earlier analysis suggested. The young people also tended to feel that they were more likely to earn a good income in the civilian sector than in the military.

LOW RESPONSE RATE TO THE RECRUIT PAY QUESTION

Table 1 shows the responses to the question asking for an estimate of recruits' monthly starting pay. 2/ Roughly half of those interviewed gave no response. The nonresponse rate varied among types of respondents in an intuitively consistent way. Those who indicated on a separate question that they had some or strong interest in the military responded at higher rates (50 percent compared to 47 percent for all respondents). Of that group, those who were high school seniors and possibly near the point of making a decision about the military responded with a somewhat higher rate (52 percent).

These high nonresponse rates to the question on recruit pay are disturbing, especially since the nonresponse rate for all other questions analyzed by CBO in this survey averaged about 4 percent. One can only speculate on the reason for such a high nonresponse rate for the recruit pay question, but it should be noted that this question is the only one asked

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1. The survey also covered an equal number of females in the same age group, but their responses are not analyzed in this paper.
 2. The question read: "As far as you know, what is the starting MONTHLY pay for an ENLISTED PERSON in the military--before taxes are deducted?" \$ _____ don't know/not sure _____.

TABLE 1. DISTRIBUTION OF MALE SURVEY RESPONDENTS ESTIMATING
MONTHLY BASIC PAY FOR RECRUITS a/

Percentage of Respondents to Pay Question Giving	Interest in Serving on Active Duty (As Either Enlisted Person or Officer)					
	All Respondents		Little or No Interest <u>b/</u>		Some or Strong Interest	
	All Males	High School Seniors	All Males	High School Seniors	All Males	High School Seniors
Accurate						
Estimate <u>c/</u>	35	36	33	32	40	43
Underestimate <u>d/</u>	49	47	49	49	47	44
Overestimate <u>e/</u>	16	17	18	19	13	13
	100	100	100	100	100	100
Percentage of Survey Population Responding <u>f/</u>	48	44	47	40	50	52

NOTE: Percentages may not total to 100 due to rounding.

- a. Question read: "As far as you know, what is the starting MONTHLY pay for an ENLISTED PERSON in the military--before taxes are deducted?" \$_____ Don't know/not sure _____
- b. Includes those who responded "Don't know/not sure" about their interest in serving on active duty.
- c. Those whose answers to the pay question fell within the \$500-\$600 range, this range being plus or minus about 10 percent of the correct \$550 value.
- d. Those whose answers were below \$500.
- e. Those whose answers were above \$600.
- f. Percentage of the survey population who gave an estimate of pay.

requiring some factual knowledge of military service. All other questions were concerned with the individual's demographic status (such as age, occupation, and education) or with attitudes (occupational preferences, reasons for lack of interest in the military, or judgments about whether a good income could be better achieved in the military or civilian sector).

Some of the high nonresponse rate may also be attributed to the wording of the question. The question asks: "As far as you know, what is the starting MONTHLY pay for an ENLISTED PERSON in the military--before taxes are deducted?" Respondents can provide a dollar estimate or indicate they don't know or are unsure. To explore this further, CBO analyzed responses to a similar question contained in a 1979 survey of enlisted recruits at an Armed Forces Entrance Examining Station (AFEES). The results displayed on Table 2 reveal that subtle changes in the wording of a question requesting pay data can have dramatic effects on the response rates. For instance, when new recruits were posed a question on the AFEES survey in a form very similar to that given in the Youth Attitude Tracking Survey (that is, allowing for a "Don't Know" response), a nonresponse/don't know rate of around 50 percent among recruits resulted--a rate similar to that for the youth attitude survey. Yet when prompts were added ("give your best guess"), or when the "Don't Know" category was deleted, the nonresponse/don't know rate dropped to 30 and 12 percent on the AFEES surveys, respectively (see Table 2). Moreover, the effort to encourage or force an estimate of recruit pay did not appear to reduce the proportion of accurate responses. ^{3/}

ACCURACY OF PAY ESTIMATES

Those who responded to the survey tended to underestimate recruit pay, but not by the very large amounts reported in earlier analysis. The median estimate of recruit pay among those who responded to the survey was about \$495 a month, compared to an actual level of \$550 a month. The earlier analysis, which computed the median at \$75, apparently included those who failed to respond to the question as if they had actually estimated recruit pay at zero dollars a month.

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3. The November 1982 Survey of Youth contains a modification to the pay question with an added prompt to encourage respondents to give their best estimate. This should reduce the high nonresponse/don't know rate found in the 1981 survey (and probably earlier).

TABLE 2. NONRESPONSE RATES AMONG NEW RECRUITS TO ALTERNATIVE FORMS OF A QUESTION REQUIRING AN ESTIMATE OF THEIR BASIC PAY

	Question: "When I enter Active Duty, My Monthly Basic Pay Will Be ____"			
	Form 1 <u>a/</u>	Form 2 <u>a/</u>	Form 3 <u>b/</u>	Form 4 <u>c/</u>
Checked "Don't Know"	45	52	26	N/A
No Response	4	4	4	12

SOURCE: 1979 Survey of Personnel Entering Military Service, sponsored by the Department of Defense.

- a. Question includes "Don't Know" response category.
- b. Includes "Don't Know" response category and a prompt to "give your best estimate."
- c. Question does not provide a "Don't Know" category, but does include the prompt, "give your best estimate."

While the median response was not far below the actual pay, many in the survey did underestimate recruit pay. Of those who responded, about one-third provided a reasonably accurate estimate (defined in this study as between \$500 and \$600 a month, or within about 10 percent of the actual pay). Of the remaining respondents, about three-quarters underestimated recruit pay while only one-quarter overestimated it (see Table 1).

The frequency of underestimation varied by type of respondent in an intuitively consistent manner. Fewer of those who expressed a positive propensity toward military service underestimated recruit pay (47 percent) when compared to those with little or no interest (49 percent). Moreover, of the positive propensity group, those who were high school seniors and thus possibly near the point of making a decision about the military had the lowest incidence of recruit pay underestimates (44 percent).

This pattern may at best be a rough guide, however, since the degree of overestimation of recruit pay did not vary in a manner similar to the that for underestimation. A greater proportion of those who showed little or no interest in military service overestimated recruit pay (18 percent) than did those who showed some or great interest (13 percent).

PERCEPTIONS OF MILITARY PAY

The survey also asked youths to indicate whether they were more likely to achieve a "good income" in a military or in a civilian job. Survey results show that most (57 percent of all males and 55 percent of male high school seniors surveyed) felt that they were somewhat more likely or much more likely to earn a good income in a civilian job. Very few (10 percent of all males and 9 percent of all male seniors) felt that way about military service. Interestingly, this pattern did not differ much between those who responded or did not respond to the question on recruit pay (see Table 3). Though having some knowledge of recruit pay does change somewhat one's impression of where a good income can best be earned.

As with the question on knowledge of recruit pay, responses varied according to the respondent's interest in military service. More of those with little or no interest in the military felt that they could earn greater amounts in civilian jobs (between 60 and 70 percent) than did those with some or great interest (about 40 percent). In contrast to answers on previous questions, however, being a high school senior did not much affect responses.

What accounts for the large percentages of persons who indicate that they can earn more in civilian jobs? One possibility is that military pay is simply not competitive with pay in the civilian sector. Unfortunately, it is difficult to establish a single value for military pay (which consists of some cash pays plus many cash and in-kind benefits); nor is there a single civilian pay level for comparison. Nonetheless, civilian wages available to youth are probably not substantially greater than wages for new military recruits when military benefits such as cash bonuses, dependency allowances, and educational benefits are considered. The great success that the military is now having in recruiting persons with high school diplomas, success that is only partially explained by high unemployment, attests to the basic competitiveness of military pay and benefits.

A more likely explanation of young people's preference for civilian employment comes from a tendency to overestimate civilian earnings opportunities. A study of the youth labor market in 1979 showed that the vast majority of job-seeking teenagers had unrealistically high expectations

TABLE 3. MALE YOUTH PERCEPTIONS OF WHERE "GOOD INCOME" IS MORE LIKELY TO BE ACHIEVED
(In percent)

[illegible]

about their earnings potential. ^{4/} Moreover, these unrealistic expectations were more prevalent among those still in school (the military's most likely prospects).

The time period youths employ in making wage comparisons may also help explain the results. While military entry-level wages for high school seniors may match or exceed those in private industry, the civilian income potential may be much greater over a longer planning horizon, especially for those who choose to defer employment and attend college. ^{5/}

Socioeconomic status may explain another aspect of these results. Young persons who express an interest in military service generally come from the middle-to-lower socioeconomic strata and their income/employment opportunities outside the military could be less favorable than those of upper-strata young people, who typically express little or no interest in military service. This may partially explain the reason for those youth favorably inclined toward military service to cite more often that the prospects for "good income" can be achieved in the military.

LIMITATIONS ON INFERENCES DRAWN FROM THE DATA

The reader should be aware that all of the comparisons in this chapter are essentially univariate in nature--that is, one variable (in this case the

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4. Michael E. Borus, "Pathways to the Future: A Report on the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth Labor Market Experience in 1979" The Ohio State University Center for Human Resource Research (December 1980).
 5. The notion of what constitutes "good income" and where it can be achieved reflects in part one's chosen reference group. In terms of wage comparisons, a considerable body of research tends to show that people usually select comparison groups similar to themselves. Blue-collar workers, for example, more frequently compare their wages to other blue-collar workers and then form judgments about the degree of satisfaction or deprivation based on their own income. Regarding the survey population employed in the youth attitude tracking survey, judgments about the adequacy of military income may reflect differences in background among participants and their preferences for social groups from which to make comparisons. For a discussion of this subject, see Joanne Martin, "The Fairness of Earnings Differentials: An Experimental Study of the Perceptions of Blue-Collar Workers," Journal of Human Resources, vol. XVII, pp. 111-122 (1982).

degree of accuracy in recruit pay estimates) was stratified according to another variable (such as judgments of where good income can best be achieved). But Table 1 showed that both the frequency of response and the degree of accuracy of the estimate of recruit pay were related to the expressed degree of interest in military service. This in turn was shown to be related to judgments about where good income can be achieved. To sort out the independent effects (if any) of each of these variables in explaining knowledge of recruit pay would require a more elaborate multivariate analysis. Unfortunately, limits on time did not permit such an analysis.

Despite these limitations, the data in the survey suggest that many youths underestimate military pay and believe that better pay can be earned in the civilian sector. These findings tend to support those who argue for greater advertising of recruit pay, perhaps even at the expense of recruit pay raises.

CHAPTER III. THE ROLE OF ADVERTISING

Data in the last chapter generally support the claim that a substantial number of young persons underestimate military pay and believe they can earn more in civilian jobs. Unfortunately, data in the same survey suggest that, even if mass advertising succeeded in properly informing youth on military pay, this may only marginally improve interest in military service. Moreover, if more advertising was done at the expense of pay raises, other research indicates that recruiting could actually be hurt. Nonetheless, there may be a need to better inform youth about military pay, especially if this better information serves to strengthen interest among those who are seriously considering joining the military.

LIMITS OF MASS ADVERTISING

Successfully conveying to youth an accurate knowledge of recruit pay does not necessarily produce a more favorable attitude to military service, especially among those who initially express little or no interest in military service. For example, in addition to asking youth how much they might earn as recruits, the interviewer informed these young people of the actual value of recruit pay and then asked them if this changed their interest in military service.

The information on recruit pay strengthened interest in military service among those who already showed accurate knowledge of recruit pay (that is, who had estimated it within 10 percent of the actual level). Of these, 20 percent indicated more interest in the military after they learned the actual value of recruit pay. Only 16 percent of those with inaccurate knowledge (generally an underestimate) indicated greater interest (see Table 4).

The more telling difference in response was based on differences in initial interest in the military. Among those who had little or no interest in the military, accurate knowledge of recruit pay had little tendency to increase interest in the military. Fully 86 percent of this group said they had no more interest after learning what recruit pay was, and only 8 percent indicated somewhat or much more interest (see Table 5). On the other hand, of those who began with some or great interest in military service, 35 percent showed somewhat or much more interest.

TABLE 4. EFFECT OF BEING TOLD ACTUAL RECRUIT PAY ON
RESPONDENTS' INTEREST IN MILITARY SERVICE
(Survey subgroup: Male high school seniors who
provided an estimate of recruit pay)

Change in Interest in Active Service After Being Told What Recruit is Paid	Prior Knowledge of Recruit Pay	
	(N = 145) Accurate	(N = 744) Inaccurate
Much More	4	5
Somewhat More	16	11
Just a Little More	12	11
No Change	61	66
Don't Know	<u>7</u>	<u>7</u>
	100	100

These results suggest that advertising recruit pay, even if it improved knowledge of actual pay, would be unlikely to stimulate interest in the military except among those already interested.

PREVIOUS RESEARCH ON THE EFFECTS OF PAY ON MILITARY RECRUITING

Recruiting could even be hurt if more advertising was done at the expense of continued increases in recruit pay. A substantial body of empirical research has found a strong positive relationship between the level of military pay relative to that for comparable work in the private sector and the supply of better-qualified enlistments. Starting with the findings of the Gates Commission in 1970, these studies have found that a given percentage change in the ratio of military to civilian pay would have an equal or greater percentage change on the supply of qualified volunteers to

TABLE 5. CHANGE IN ATTITUDE TOWARD MILITARY SERVICE AFTER BEING INFORMED OF RECRUIT PAY, BY DEGREE OF INTEREST IN MILITARY SERVICE (In percent)

Change in Likelihood of Serving In Military <u>b/</u>	All Males		Male High School Senior s	
	Degree of Interest in Military Service a/		Degree of Interest in Military Service a/	
	Little or None	Some or Great	Little or None	Some or Great
Much More	2	15	2	12
Somewhat More	6	20	8	22
Just a Little More	6	18	11	15
Not More	<u>86</u>	<u>47</u>	<u>79</u>	<u>51</u>
	100	100	100	100

a. Before being told what recruit receives in pay.

b. After being told what recruit receives in pay.

the military. ^{1/} It has been on the basis of these studies that the Department of Defense has often argued that military pay must at least remain comparable with private-sector pay to ensure an adequate supply of qualified volunteers. While other factors such as employment opportunities in the private sector and the level of resources dedicated to the recruiting effort, have played an important role, adequate pay appears to be key in sustaining the volunteer system.

1. Thomas Gates and others, The Report of the President's Commission on the All-Volunteer Armed Force (MacMillan, 1970); and Captain Thomas V. Daula, Major Thomas W. Fagan, and D. Alton Smith, A Microdata Model of Enlistment in the Armed Forces (June 1982).

NEED TO BETTER INFORM YOUTH

These results do not suggest that conveying information about pay is unimportant. Rather, they suggest that information on pay may take on greater significance in the latter stages of the applicants enlistment decisionmaking process. Some of those who already express interest in the military will become more interested upon knowing military pay. Taken in this context, advertising of pay at this point, probably best done by the recruiters, may well "close the sale."

The role of advertising, however, is not necessarily to close the sale but to stimulate interest among qualified persons. At the early stage of the decisionmaking process, advertising a wide variety of service benefits--such as skill training, improved employment opportunities once out of the military, and educational benefits--may do more to persuade youth to investigate further the merits of military service, eventually culminating in more enlistments.

APPENDIX MILITARY PAY AND ITS RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER SURVEY VARIABLES

As mentioned in earlier chapters, substantial differences existed between those who expressed interest in military service and those who did not. Some respondents were more definite in their interest than others. Some were more aware than others of the level of military pay. Those showing little or no interest are typically better qualified and therefore more desirable as recruits. This appendix examines these differences in greater detail.

INTEREST IN SERVING ON ACTIVE DUTY

Demographic profiles differ in many significant respects when comparing those who express an interest in military service to those who have little or no interest. It appears that a disproportionate share of those less qualified (and possibly less desirable) from the military's perspective express a positive interest in military service. Stated another way, the more desirable candidates for recruiting are also much less inclined toward military service. Table A-1 presents data that appeared in a recent analysis of the annual youth attitude survey.

The degree of commitment toward military service appears to be tenuous. For example, only about 5 percent of males responded "definitely" concerning their likelihood of entering active-duty service. The vast majority of those positively inclined toward active-duty service responded "probably" (25 percent of the male survey population). At the other end of the military interest spectrum, 38 percent of the males surveyed responded "definitely not" while the remaining 30 percent responded "probably not." Those not inclined toward military service (the negative propensity group) tend to hold this view with much greater intensity than those favorably inclined toward military service (the positive-propensity group). ^{1/}

Other data in the survey tend to confirm this somewhat tenuous attachment toward military service on the part of the positive propensity group. For example, Table A-2 shows that male high school seniors who

1. Youth Attitude Tracking Study, pp. 75-76.

TABLE A-1. DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF GROUPS WITH POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE PROPENSITIES TO MILITARY SERVICE

Characteristics	Percent of Positive Group	Percent of Negative Group
White	78	88
Black	15	7
Other Nonwhite	7	4
Completed 10th Grade	9	4
Completed 11th Grade	22	13
Completed 12th Grade	20	16
High School Graduate, Not in School	25	36
Completed 1-2 Years College	8	22
Vocational Curriculum in High School	46	32
Commercial/Business Curriculum	16	12
College Preparatory Curriculum	36	54
As and Bs in High School	22	34
Planning to Attend Vocational School	60	45
Planning to Attend College	64	71
Student	62	57
Employed	53	63
Not Employed/Looking for Work	32	20

NOTE: The table indicates the percentages of each group having specific characteristics. For example, 78 percent of those interested in military service were white, and 88 percent of those not interested were white.

express little or no interest in military service focus their attention predominantly on going to college or attending a vocational/technical school. The positive-propensity high school seniors, when asked about their career expectations, show a wide dispersion of career interests. Many are strongly inclined toward post-secondary school attendance. In general,

TABLE A-2. CAREER EXPECTATIONS AMONG MALE HIGH SCHOOL SENIORS

Percentage Reporting Definitely or Probably Doing in Next Few Years <u>a/</u>	Degree of Reported Interest in Active Military Service			
	Little or No Interest		Some or Great Interest	
Laborer	28	(5)	41	(6)
Desk Job in Business	40	(4)	35	(3)
Military	8	(0)	76	(13)
Salesman	34	(4)	30	(3)
Going to College	80	(55)	72	(36)
Going to Vocational/ Technical School	44	(16)	56	(17)

a. Figures in parentheses represent percentages who responded "definitely" regarding the prospects of doing this within the next few years.

members of the positive propensity group do not seem to have an especially strong affinity for military service but rather appear to be "keeping their options open."

Historical Trends in Propensity to Service

Although interest in military service remains tenuous, a comparison of the proportions of the surveyed male populations (and especially the high school senior subpopulation) shows an increasing share expressing interest in active-duty service. In the 1981 survey, for example, 36 percent of the male high school seniors surveyed expressed such an interest compared to about 31 percent in the 1978 survey (see Table A-3).

The increased interest has not been distributed equally among the separate services, however. Proportionately, interest in the Air Force and, to a lesser extent, the Army, has increased at the expense of the other services (see Table A-4). Even more marked changes occurred in the

TABLE A-3. TREND IN PROPENSITY FOR MILITARY SERVICE (Percent in each fall survey wave who responded "definitely" or "probably")

Survey Population	1978	1979	1980	1981
All Males	29	27	30	30
Male High School Seniors	31	30	34	36

TABLE A-4. TRENDS IN PROPENSITY OF MALE HIGH SCHOOL SENIORS FOR SPECIFIC MILITARY SERVICES (Percent in each Fall survey wave who responded "definitely" or "probably")

Service Favored	1978	1979	1980	1981
Army	12 (24)	11 (17)	13 (16)	14 (30)
Navy	16 (24)	16 (23)	15 (25)	15 (19)
Marine Corps	13 (19)	10 (18)	11 (15)	11 (26)
Air Force	17 (37)	20 (35)	22 (34)	23 (42)

NOTE: Respondents frequently noted "definitely" or "probably" to more than one service. For example, in 1981 about 70 percent of those who said "definitely or probably" to the Army responded the same way to at least one additional active service. Stated another way, the percentages of those citing a particular service choice as "definitely" or "probably" who did so to the exclusion of all other services were (in 1981) Army, 30 percent; Navy 19 percent; Air Force, 42 percent and Marine Corps 26 percent. These figures are shown in parentheses.

proportion of male high school seniors citing definite or probable interest in a given service to the exclusion of all other services. This could be considered a measure of service preference among those who express an interest in active-duty service. In the 1978 survey, for example, 24 percent of those who expressed definite or probable interest in the Army did so to the exclusion of all other services. After a significant dip in 1979 and 1980, this figure rose to 30 percent in 1981. A similar pattern of strength in single-service identification appears to have occurred for both the Marine Corps and the Air Force. For the Navy, however, the figure remained stable until 1981, when it dropped off. The reader should be aware, however, that tests of statistical significance were not conducted on this data, and that the sample sizes are relatively small.

Trends in Service Shares of High-Quality Enlistment Contracts

In all probability, some relationship exists between these attitudes toward military service and the numbers of better qualified recruits enlisting in the military. The improvement in favorable attitudes toward military service has probably been translated into greater enlistments. Table A-5 shows, for example, that the number of high-quality male enlistment contracts declined by over 40 percent between 1977 and 1979. But a sharp turnaround occurred in later years and the results for 1982 slightly exceed those for 1977.

The Air Force has traditionally taken the largest share of this high-quality enlistment group. In 1982, however, the Army moved from third to first place in market share. Part of this shift can be attributed to the fact that the Air Force has a somewhat lower recruiting requirement in 1983, so that contracts signed during 1982 reflect this reduced requirement. The Navy has also shown a tendency toward a smaller share of the high-quality enlistment market. Part of this may be attributed to some constraint on the recruiting requirements, but the Navy may also be experiencing difficulties in exploiting the recruiting potential offered by more favorable attitudes toward military service due to a weakening of its image vis-a-vis the other services, particularly the Army.

KNOWLEDGE OF RECRUIT PAY AND EXPOSURE TO THE RECRUITING SYSTEM

The Youth Attitude Tracking Study includes several questions measuring respondents' recall of any exposure to the recruiting process, including service advertising campaigns or contact with recruiters. One would naturally expect that the greater their exposure and involvement in the

TABLE A-5. MALE HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATE, I-III A ENLISTMENT
CONTRACTS SIGNED IN FISCAL YEAR 1977-1982
(Percent by service)

	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982
Army	28	24	25	23	26	35
Navy	31	32	31	30	28	28
Marine Corps	10	11	11	11	11	11
Air Force	<u>31</u>	<u>33</u>	<u>33</u>	<u>36</u>	<u>35</u>	<u>26</u>
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100
(Number)	(108,569)	(70,876)	(63,051)	(88,150)	(95,037)	(110,346)

SOURCE: Defense Manpower Data Center, Report #6465C. (Data unofficial, but should be reasonably representative of actual results.)

NOTE: High school graduates, though also considered high-quality recruits, are not included in the table because data is not available for 1977 and 1978. However, the trends including high school seniors are probably similar.

enlistment process, the better informed respondents should be about military pay.

Examining answers to the recruit pay question of respondents who also claimed to have contact with a recruiter appears to support this hypothesis, since these individuals more frequently responded with an accurate estimate of recruit pay. As Table A-6 shows, those male high school seniors who had contact with a recruiter were much more likely to provide an accurate estimate of pay than those who claimed no contact with a recruiter. The reader should exercise caution in interpreting these figures, however, since

neither the existence nor the direction of cause and effect relationships can be substantiated from this data; that is, it cannot be said that contact with a recruiter is the predominant reason for these male high school seniors having more accurate knowledge of recruit pay. It could be that both of these variables (that is, knowledge of recruit pay and contact with a recruiter) are natural outcomes related to interest in the military as well as part of the larger search process among high school seniors as they confront important career choices.

TABLE A-6. CONTACT WITH A RECRUITER (LAST SIX MONTHS)
AND KNOWLEDGE OF RECRUIT PAY AMONG
MALE HIGH SCHOOL SENIORS

Percentage of Respondents to Pay Question Giving:	Recruiter Contact	
	(N = 348) Contact	(N = 546) No Contact
Accurate Estimate	44	28
Underestimate	43	51
Overestimate	<u>13</u>	<u>8</u>
	100	100

NOTE: About 40 percent of the male high school seniors surveyed (November 1981) claimed to have had contact with a recruiter over the past six months. Of these, 54 percent responded to the pay question. Of those who did not recall such contact, 39 percent responded to the pay question.

